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## **Consolidating the Past and Risking the Future: Colombia's Developmental Trajectory and the Prospects for a Lasting Peace in the Wake of the Havana Accord**

**Rafael R. Ioris and Antonio A.R. Ioris**

*In light of the peace accord approved in 2016 between the Colombian government and the FARC, this paper scrutinizes, from a historical perspective, present-day dilemmas and obstacles to a sustainable settlement capable of addressing the long-term developmental inequities of the country. One of the guiding hypotheses animating this reflection is that, as the country becomes more integrated in the globalized economy, the many parties involved in the conflict came to believe that they had more to gain with the peace than otherwise, thus paving the way to a renewed effort towards peace. Yet, despite its many promises, as of now, the details of the peace negotiations need to be seen primarily as a means to potentially boost the economy and facilitate the access to Colombian resources than a transformative achievement towards much-needed political and economic inclusion. In that regard, there are some disturbing continuities between the inequalities deepened during the protracted civil war and the prospects for sustained uneven development under the 2016 peace agreement.*

### **INTRODUCTION: SOBERING NEWS FROM A COUNTRY RAVAGED BY WAR**

On a late-night announcement on November 12th, 2016, Colombian president Juan Manuel Santos declared “We have reached a new final accord to end the armed conflict that integrates changes and propositions suggested by the most diverse sectors of society”, thus trying to assuage the crisis created by the ‘No’ vote that had stunned everyone in the country and around the world earlier in the previous month.<sup>1</sup> The revised agreement was later in the same month endorsed by the national congress and, this time around, despite some criticism from ‘No’ supporters (particularly from the former president Alvaro Uribe), Santos did not risk putting the document through a second referendum where another defeat was maybe possible.<sup>2</sup>

It still remains to be seen how this revised agreement shall be implemented but it signals to the possibility of ending Latin America's longest military conflict in modern history. To be sure, the rejection of the so-called Havana Accord signed between the Colombian government and the FARC (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, the country's main remaining armed insurgent group), on the referendum of October 2nd, represented a clear sign that though essential, formal peace is not the only measure the country needs. Besides that, the negotiations that led to the peace Accord and its eventual approval by the Colombian Congress derived both from the willingness of both President Santos and the widespread war fatigue in Colombian society.

In this sense, paraphrasing the title of one of Gabriel García Márquez novels, it was already a 'Chronicle of a Necessary Accord Foretold', in the sense that the government and the guerrilla no longer had appetite for a pointless civil war. Colombia had paid a high price for the continuation of a protracted conflict that for decades ravaged the national society and prevented more sustainable paths of economic growth in the country. Although in the last few years insurgent group activities decreased,<sup>3</sup> this was not necessarily translated in many areas of the country into actual state rule or at least state presence.<sup>4</sup> In fact, in many rural and more isolated regions, the continued threat of reverting back to a state of overt violence is still very present and many still find in illegal activities their main means of subsistence, often involving profitable connections with drug traffic dealers. Cocaine is often the only economic alternative in remote corners of the country and may respond for around 3% to 5% of Colombia's GDP, thus fostering violence, corruption, illegality and uncertainty.<sup>5</sup> Having said that, it is also the case that the connections between the civil war, drug production and economic development are not clear and the findings are contradictory. Some regions and sectors of the economy seem to have thrived even in the most

somber and violent periods of the long civil war. There are authors who argue that violence reduced economic activity, while others claim that it might have increased total household incomes.

Boding additional challenges to come, the hope that a lasting peace could be quickly materialized and the road to some sort of social normality could emerge was left hanging in the air by the results of the October referendum (where the 'no' vote won by a very slender majority). Not surprisingly, domestic public opinion was deeply polarized, with the regions mostly ravaged by war-related activities producing some of the highest levels of support for the original Havana Accord, only to lose to wider, mostly urban coalitions positioned against the ceasefire agreement.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the main winners were conservative politicians (under the leadership of Álvaro Uribe and the public prosecutor Alejandro Ordóñez), the belligerent section of the army and its associated military industry.<sup>7</sup> More importantly, the difficulty of the political system to lead to a clear victory of the reconciliation agenda tells a great deal about the limitations and hurdles of the fragile Colombian democracy.

In addition to the inability of the referendum to endorse the peace process as agreed in Havana, Colombia continues to face sustained socio-economic challenges, aggravated by recent rising levels of organized crime activity not only in the countryside but also in urban areas. These latest developments have not occurred in the void but rather within an already deeply unbalanced land tenure system that has fueled the rise and continuous operation of various guerrilla groups over the last 60 years.<sup>8</sup> Throughout the country, land distribution is extremely inequitable and with less than 1% of the population owning more than half of Colombia's best land; in addition, land tenure is notoriously insecure, especially for indigenous peoples, peasants and subsistence farmers. The attempts of successive governments to advance agrarian reforms were largely ineffective due to corruption and limited resources; in recent years, the focus shifted from land reform to

agribusiness-based rural development. Thus, though laudable for trying to move beyond an overly militaristic approach to the continued conflict in the country followed by his predecessors, President Santos' political overtures will need to be complemented by continued and substantive negotiations, backed up by actual economic measures aimed at reintegrating local communities into the national economy. This seems particularly relevant today, as the country's mainstream economic policies have become ever more aligned with those of free-trade agreements, such as the *Alianza del Pacífico* [Pacific Alliance] and the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which are likely to aggravate social inequality due to the market-based priorities of such strategies.

In light of all the manifold and potentially consequential recent developments in Colombia, this article examines present-day dilemmas and obstacles to a more socially inclusive and politically sustainable peace settlement capable of readdressing the many developmental shortcomings in the history of the country. The paper's main theoretical reference is the oligarchic development history of Colombia and the ability of its national elites to reinvent themselves and reaffirm their power during both times of peace and conflict. This is directly related to the political economy of war protraction, as described by Richani, which is the accumulation of economic assets by 'armed actors' (including the army and political and commercial elites) who create and benefit from the positive political economy for war.<sup>9</sup> In the case of Colombia, the complex set of benefits that the war brought to the military and the guerrilla during the 1970s and 1980s, and particularly in the early 1990s (largely associated with the oligarchic history of the country and explained by the comfortable impasse established under a low-intensity war that didn't affect rent extraction) were increasingly constrained by diminishing political and economic returns after the emergence of the paramilitary groups in the 1990s.

The current piece was initially inspired on the unexpected defeat of the president's position in the referendum held on October 2nd, 2016 and the hastily return to the negotiation table. Departing from the failed referendum, we then sought to investigate the potential courses for lasting peace and its associate goal of regional and national reconstruction and development. Moving beyond the specifics of the Havana Accord and the more directly related dynamics of conflict resolution (e.g. demobilization of troops and compensation of the victims), this article aims at reflecting, from a historical perspective, on a broader and prospective scale on how developmental matters may instigate Colombia's path towards not only peace, but effective socio-economic and political enfranchisement.

### **COLOMBIA'S DEVELOPMENTAL TRAJECTORY: THE LONG AND TORTUOUS ROAD TO (NO) PEACE**

Colombia is a country of abundant natural resources and economic potential mired by major contrasts between regions, peoples and economic sectors. The nation has followed an intensely painful path in recent decades, which combined a resilient leftist guerrilla, influential drug traffic activities, striking violence in urban and rural areas, and aggressive economic liberalism fueled by natural resource exports (oil in particular).<sup>10</sup> Colombian historical trajectory has been defined by continued sharp socio-economic contrasts and the succession of fast-paced developmental initiatives – such as a remarkable insertion into the global economy as an important primary commodity exporter, starting at the end of the 19th century, as well as the significant levels of industrialization achieved in the middle of the 20th century – which though successful, have not been instrumental to ameliorate, let alone address the severe inequality that is to this day a defining feature of the country. As kindly pointed out by an anonymous referee, who engaged vigorously with the previous versions of this text, what happened in Colombia was uncommon in

the rest of Latin America, given that Colombia managed to maintain relative economic stability, largely avoiding the boom-bust and debt-crisis chaos of other countries; moreover, the ability to achieve this has probably depended largely on maintaining and deepening socio-political inequalities.

This is a particularly disheartening reality considering that, for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Colombia witnessed a substantial degree of economic and political experimentation and change. In fact, the nation witnessed fast-paced economic growth, important levels of industrial growth in different parts of the country, and, especially since the late 1950s, and even more so in the 1960s and 1970s, when the country came to be seen by most of its regional neighbors as a remarkable case of success of liberal democratic institutions. To be sure, given the context of dictatorial regimes throughout much of the region in the period, the Colombia experiences with pre-accorded peaceful transitions of power among the two main political parties (Liberal and Conservative), in the wake of the creation of the National Front in 1957, seemed warranted as a case of a functioning, formally liberal political system. To be sure, this was a highly undemocratic contract, taking into consideration it looked like a peaceful transfer of power but was actually backed up by *La Violencia* – the ten-year civil war that marred the country, particularly the countryside between 1948 and 1958 – and thus only possible because of the threat of renewed violence. As this paper seeks to indicate, the Colombian experiences since at least the middle of the 20th century should rather be seen as those of the history of the shortcomings of formal democracy, as well as those of top-down attempted modernization.

Pertaining to the political dimension, between 1958 and the late 1970s, though some changes were made along the way, the Colombian political system was best characterized by coalitional rule between Liberals and Conservatives, at times in ways that resembled the

experiences of consorciational regimes, though in the Colombian case, without the ethnic, religious, or linguistic elements.<sup>11</sup> And although the National Front was able to put an end of the traumatic experiences of *La Violencia*, largely by creating strong incentives to the two main parties to accept the *rules of the game*; the restrictive nature of the political to all other relevant political forces, especially among popular sectors, was nonetheless solidified by the elitist and restrictive character of the power-sharing agreement put in place in 1958.

The oligarchic nature of the Colombian state was further reinforced by a central feature of the historical political evolution of the country: its weak central structures of state and strong regional elites. It is worth noting, also, that the Colombian elite that has promoted economic development through a very conservative social platform (for instance, maintaining vertical immobility and political control) is not cohesive and united on many issues and practices its leadership along a complex coordination of public and private initiatives.<sup>12</sup> In effect, like in many cases in other Latin American societies, Colombian regional oligarchies have managed to advance modernization and economic growth while having to accommodate multiple interests, characters and groups. Along this path, the central Colombian state has more than once proven weaker to promote broad levels of social reform especially vis-à-vis powerfully encroached provincial ruling groups.<sup>13</sup>

Taken together, these deep-set features of the Colombian developmental trajectory would, in the long run, prove conducive to rising levels of dissatisfaction particularly in periods of rapid demographic growth, such in the postwar era. The formal shortcomings of the Colombian political institutions were also aggravated by the frustration of even middle-income sectors about the possibility of significant socio-economic reform within the formal political system. In fact, even when land reform was attempted in a more concerted fashion, such as during the sponsorship of



the Alliance for Progress in the early 1960s, when the country was chosen to be a showcase of the initiative, and despite the initial enthusiasm among urban middle sectors, the results of the program palled against the expectations of both the Colombian and US governments, and were certainly much less than what was needed.<sup>14,15</sup>

Sadly, though disappointing, these experiences fits well within the history of Colombian land tenure and activities, where traditionally small plotters were not allowed by large landholders to grow coffee in their own plots as this was seen as dangerously freeing them from traditional economic and political rule of local bosses.<sup>16</sup> Much in the same way, the important industrialization of the middle of the century was largely derivative of a cross-sectional alliance between traditional landowning families and regional industrialists, which rather than create a new social segment capable of some sort of rupture from the traditional forms of exerting political power, rather worked to consolidate control of the decision-making process in traditional oligarchic forces, thus sustaining the path of restricted access to the decision-making process, though industrial workers did then, and still do their best to push the boundaries of the local and national spheres of economic and political power.<sup>17,18</sup> Moreover, the National Front actively worked through clientelistic politics and restricted legislation to more autonomous forms of mobilization to sustain a divided, weak and dispersed labor movement.<sup>19</sup>

In this sense, though it may be true that the National Front proved successful in preventing overt military intervention in the political realm for much of the second half of the twentieth century, a time when much of the region was mired in co-called bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes. Unfortunately, this outcome seems to have been reached at the cost of excluding more socially advanced, progressive and even radical demands (e.g. the socialist agenda advanced by student and intellectuals groups) and actors being repressed. In the long run this dynamics

enhanced the already present political apathy of growing numbers of political and economic disenfranchised groups. Furthermore, the guaranteed share of state resources in all realms of government which assured the democratic election of four, Liberal and Conservative party president, between 1958 and 1970, was conducive to enhanced corruption and patronage of favored supporters.<sup>20</sup>

The second half of the twentieth century in Colombia was, in effect, marked on the one hand by relative economic successes, especially that of sustained economic growth and the rise of a domestic manufacturing industry, while, on the other hand, continued and exacerbated problems with internal violence and displacement of dozens of thousands of people. Especially during the said-to-be economic success of the late 1960s and 1970s, the country benefitted from rising international prices for its historically main export item: coffee. Similarly, even if impacted by the regional debt crisis of the early 1980s, Colombia nonetheless withstood that experience significantly better than most of its neighbors, at least partially due to rising prices for what has since become one of its key sources of revenues, namely oil exports. Moreover, notwithstanding the fact that the formal economy had been strengthened in the last few decades, two main negative sides of these dynamics have to be highlighted. First, the continued deeply uneven ways in which the economic growth achieved in the period benefitted the country's population. The level of poverty remained significantly high between 1979 and 1991 (with a marginal reduction from 0.59 to 0.57) and the Gini coefficient reduced only marginally between 1978 and 1988 (mainly because of changes in urban areas) and then stabilized between 1988 and 1995 (with deterioration of the Gini coefficient in the countryside).<sup>21</sup> Secondly, the fact that an important, though not easily measurable element of this economic revival derived from the ever more present production and exportation of illegal drugs.

Especially relevant for today's context, the late 1980s witnessed the rise of new scale of widespread violence, this time marked the presence of flaunting drug lords (e.g. Pablo Escobar), who controlled enormous economic resources and related political influence in the country. Combined, and also largely pressured by new, strengthened and mobilized social movements, these events pushed for the writing of a new constitution, which in many ways represented a new start for the country and was, appropriately, thus, shrouded in high expectations. In specific, the 1991 constitution strengthened judicial powers, recognized the country's cultural pluralism, broadened the scope of individual and political rights, and expanded municipal and regional autonomy. At the same time, however, clearly reflecting the persistent logic of militarism as an accepted means of action in Colombian politics, the document was largely silent of the about the status of the police and military and their relations with civil authority. To be sure, unchecked by the new legislators, military spending had increased five times between 1985 and 1990. The size of the army doubled and the national police remained under control of the Ministry of Defense.<sup>22</sup>

Alongside these legal reforms, negotiations between the Colombian government and revolutionary groups have been present in the course of the brutal conflicts marking the history of the country. In the early 1980s, for one, President Betancur negotiated a cease-fire in 1982-1985 aimed to grant amnesty to some guerrillas and release political prisoners, paving the way to the creation of the *Unión Patriótica* [Patriotic Union], a political arm of the FARC then. However, these negotiations fell apart when vast numbers of members of the Patriotic Union were systematically gunned down and another revolutionary group, M-19, famously seized the Supreme Court building in Bogota and, when the military tried to retake the premises, 11 justices and more than 100 people were killed.

New rounds of peace negotiation happened under the presidency of Pastrana Arango (1998-2002), but these ended abruptly with the kidnap of a congressman and other political figures by the guerrilla. Pastrana introduces the unpopular and controversial ‘Plan Colombia’, supported and financed by the USA, which was mostly aimed at stopping the drug flow (cocaine and heroin in particular) to the USA over the Mexican border. As a whole, the plan’s anti-drug policy proved ineffective in terms of decreasing production, generating economic development and, ultimately, reducing violence. In the last two decades, the USA government invested more than US\$ 25 billion on international drug-control programs, but the initiative largely failed to reduce the supply of cocaine and heroin entering the country, while at the same time generated widespread and profoundly damaging consequences in Latin America.<sup>23</sup> In the end, Plan Colombia may have reduced the cultivation of cocoa plants, but not cocaine processing (now estimated around 70% of global production), while aggravating the humanitarian crisis and forced internal displacement.<sup>24</sup>

Within this persistent challenging scenario, in 2004, Álvaro Uribe Vélez launched the *Plan Patriota* [Patriotic Plan], also with the direct help of the USA, aimed to displace guerrilla groups, occupy remote areas traditionally controlled by the guerrilla and promote social programs. New legislation passed in 2005 had provisions for reduced punishment for both paramilitary and guerrilla fighters if they surrendered their arms, renounced violence and returned assets appropriated illegally. FARC’s response was the ‘Resistance Plan’ in the form of an offensive organized to counteract military action and undermine the perception that security improved with Uribe. Moreover, in 2006, some preliminary peace talks already took place in Cuba between the government and ELN but produced no concrete results.

The situation remained unstable with a succession of political scandals involving the association between politicians and the paramilitary, clashes with Ecuador and Venezuela, and the

continuous war with FARC (with the killing of its leader, Raúl Reyes, and the release of a high-profile hostage, Ingrid Betancourt, in 2008). FARC launches the 'Rebirth Plan' in 2009 that intensified warfare with the controversial use of landmines, snipers and bombing of urban areas; this plan encouraged the government to again take the offensive and clash with the guerrilla. Despite investments in the army's ability to face the guerrilla, violence and dissatisfaction continued to be fueled in the countryside because of the increasing concentration of land ownership and serious levels of inequality leading to recruitment of dissatisfied individuals by guerrilla groups.<sup>25</sup>

In 2010, the former Secretary of Defense under Uribe, Juan Manuel Santos, was elected president (after the courts decided that Uribe could not run for a third term in office). In 2012, Santos announced that the government would engage in talks with FARC in order to explore alternatives to end the long conflict, learning from past mistakes and from the frustrated attempts that tried to resolve the issues (although such level of commitment was criticized by the former president Uribe as a sign of weakness and an effort to seek peace at any cost). In a climate of great national and international expectation, Santos announced in September 2016 the complete settling of the dispute between the government and the FARC and revealed the details of a comprehensive truth and reconciliation process. The agreement included the admissions of guilt and the requirement to do community service by the perpetrators of violence during the conflict.

Although it was not a legal requirement, President Santos promised in 2015 to submit the Peace Accord to a public referendum in order to legitimize its targets and the mechanism of retributive justice. Considering the tumultuous and exclusionary history of the country, it is no surprise that peace negotiations have been so protracted and late-in-coming. In fact, it seems to be largely on the basis of the idiosyncratic place President Santos is trying to occupy in the current

political scenario of Colombia, vis-à-vis his predecessor and the weakened state of the FARC that a path towards a lasting peace came into fruition.<sup>26</sup> Yet, complicating things further, and to the surprise of the international community, as indicated, on October 2nd, most Colombians rejected the first version of the Accord, a clear indication that the terms of the agreement were far from universally accepted.

One of the champions of the ‘No’ was Uribe, who articulated a fierce campaign against what his group considered a soft, accommodating plan. The former president is close tied to the interests of powerful groups of landowners and other conservative forces that are likely to risk losing economic and political ground from new plans to distribute land to former guerrilla members.<sup>27</sup> Complicating things further just a few days after the frustrated outcome of the referendum, another unexpected development surprised the country and the international community: the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize for 2016 to President Santos, even without any concrete solution to the conflict. The prize seems to have been a bet on the possibility of future peace, even though this decision was also criticized as direct interference in national, ongoing negotiations because it suddenly increased the popularity and the visibility of the Colombian president. In fact, the Norwegian Nobel Committee was the first to declare that their decision was to encourage “all those who are striving to achieve peace, reconciliation and justice in Colombia. The president himself has made it clear that he will continue to work for peace right up until his very last day in office. Thus the Committee hoped that the Peace Prize would give him strength to succeed in this demanding task. Furthermore, it is the Committee's hope that in the years to come the Colombian people will reap the fruits of the ongoing peace and reconciliation process.”<sup>28</sup>

The negative result obtained in the ballot boxes did not trigger a reopening of the hostilities, but forced the parties involved to go back to the negotiation table. It was not clear what would

happen if the ‘No’ prevailed, but both the government and the FARC had already traveled a long way and there was a strong willingness to try to secure the anticipated peace. And though it is still unclear whether this peace deal, shall be indeed implemented, it will likely serve as a benchmark for more lasting and much needed developmental reforms in this rich and promising nation. If restricted to allowing the deepening of economic ties to an ever-more interdependent global economy, ready to invest more in the country, the Havana Accord will once again, like many similar plans in the past, basically mirror the oligarchic nature of Colombian politics and society rather than provide more inclusive paths for the future.

#### **ENDEMIC VIOLENCE AND THE FINAL OFFER OF PEACE: THE HAVANA ACCORD AND THE MULTIPLE PARTIES INVOLVED**

Peace negotiations between the government of Colombia and the FARC, the country’s main remaining armed insurgent group, started taking place in Havana, the capital of Cuba (which was considered by the guerrilla as a safe and reliable neutral ground), more than four years ago and this time, despite, many setbacks along the way, it seemed that things could come to a fruitful end after more than 50 years of conflict. In fact, in contrast with similar attempts in the early 1980s and late 1990s, this round of negotiations was seen by most, inside and outside the country, at least until a few days ago, as the culmination of a process of national political restructuring that could finally produce a very elusive and still-needed lasting peace. The process deviated from the conservative path, known as the *Política de Defensa y Seguridad Democrática* [Democratic Security Policy], put together by the Uribe administration (2002-2010), in the wake of the national crisis of the 1990s. Derivative mainly from the latest wave of drug-related violence, this Policy was mainly aimed at revamping the national economy, along a path of pro-market reforms that

included security adjustments,<sup>29</sup> which is an approach that visibly maintained pro-elite, oligarchic rule.

Colombia still faces many difficult socio-economic challenges today, including urban-rural inequalities, land concentration and modest rural development, social exclusion and a dysfunctional democracy, as well as the need to deal with the uncertainties of global trade and the depressed price of commodities (such as the market value of oil exports). To many, especially in the international investors' community, as well as their domestic counterparts, these actions seemed to be the best way to restructure the country's economy, especially in a time when much of Latin America was surfing the so-called pink wave under national-developmental administrations.<sup>30</sup>

Interestingly, while the country since the 1990s, despite the party in power, has pushed for a path of market-led reforms inserting the national economy in the reigns of a regionally and globally more integrated commodity markets, state repression against traditional guerrilla insurgents were similarly deepened, particularly under the guise of Plan Colombia and the associated growth of paramilitary forces. Moreover, in spite of the fact that some of the latter was eventually curbed, largely due to international pressure, the rise in militarism and increased military expenditures as part of the national budget were continuous and permanent trends.<sup>31</sup> And although in the last few years insurgent group activities decreased, this was not necessarily translated in many areas of the country into actual state rule or even presence. As already indicated above, in many rural and more isolated regions, the continued threat of reverting back to a state of overt violence is still very present and many still find in illegal activities their main means of subsistence.<sup>32</sup>



Endemic violence has undoubtedly been a persistent problem and one important face of Colombian society throughout much of its history, not restricted to one sector or specific regions of the country, but rather found in both rural and urban areas. There are many different, and interconnected, dimensions of the same problem, such as socio-economic, political, domestic, and racial violence. As also indicated the modernization and industrialization of the country in the middle of the last century never delivered all promises and never fulfilled all expectations, at the same time that accelerated the disintegration of cultures and ecosystems. The government, the political system, the army and the judiciary were not able to maintain a functioning democratic state, which left space for the provision of some public services and partial social security by the guerrillas. What is more, though negatively impacted the huge potential of the Colombia economy, endemic violence does not seem to have radically prevented the expansion of specific economic sectors, nor completely halted the flow of foreign direct investment in the country.

In fact, the violence perpetrated by armed groups sympathetic to the interests of the oil industry (e.g. public armed forces and right-wing paramilitaries) facilitated investments in the sector, as forced displacement and violence against civilian groups served to protect economically important infrastructure and secured land for oil exploration.<sup>33</sup> Much in the same way, the central Colombian state could not develop, let “modernize” the country, without establishing a standard monopoly of violence in the territory because of a symbiotic relationship between the parties controlling the state and various non-state actors who exercise power in rural peripheries.<sup>34</sup> But if the economy was only partially affected by the conflict, widespread violence reached disturbing levels. Between 1985 and 1998, the annual average rate of homicides was 1,420, with a tendency to grow; during this period, there were 14,000 violent incidents, including attack against

populations, sabotage and kidnaping; among the victims of the conflict, 27% were members of the civil society, 28% were army fighters and 46% were members of guerrilla groups.<sup>35</sup>

There are increasing numbers of significantly violent crimes, including many with economic motivation (as in the case of kidnaping). As a result, regions mostly ravaged by war-related activities and disputes for mineral and other natural resources, such as Choco, produced some of the highest levels of support for the Havana Accord in the October second referendum.<sup>36</sup> Other trials, some of which are probably directly related to the failed approval of the Peace Accord, are related to the rising levels of organized crime activity not only in the countryside but also in urban areas.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, Colombia has witnessed one of the largest numbers of displaced populations of over 6.9 million people (only comparable with the recent Syrian and Iraq refugee crises), according to a United Nations report,<sup>38</sup> and the ways to address this problem have also led to continued hurdles towards moving to a post-conflict situation.

Yet, as challenging as these dynamics are, they have occurred in specific historical and geographical circumstances and within an already deeply unbalanced land tenure structure which have plagued the country's history. In fact, now, when some form of peace and concord is looming, there are emerging pressures for natural resources exploitation (as in the Pacific coast and in the Amazon region) that are likely to benefit enormously from the pacification of the countryside and from the pursuit of pro-market institutional reforms. In fact, though laudable for trying to move beyond an overly militaristic approach to the structural lines of the continued conflict in the country followed by his predecessor, Santos' political overtures are largely aimed at integrating many communities into the national economy, particularly in times when Colombia's mainstream economic policies have become ever more aligned with those of free-trade agreements, such as the aforementioned Trans-Pacific Partnership.<sup>39</sup>

To be sure, land reform and the creation of restrictions on foreign involvement in key industries, such as mining and oil exploration, were some of the main demands the negotiators from the FARC presented repeatedly to the government in order to suspend activities. In fact, the growing acceptance of the Santos' administration of the land reform claim has been seen as one of the most promising aspects of the peace negotiations.<sup>40</sup> Formal peace shall likely attract and facilitate the operation of foreign companies interested in Colombia's abundant resources (one of the new frontiers is exactly the Pacific coast, in the Department of Choco, formally recognized by the British Embassy in Bogota as an opportunity for UK miners and timber millers), and that, disguised behind the elegant rhetoric of the peace treaty and the emphasis on 'integral rural development' and respect to local socio-culture, much-needed elements for effective development shall unfortunately only vaguely be pursued – should the commitments made in the Havana Accord be any indication of what is to come.

The importance of the agrarian question is not surprising in a country ravaged by land-tenure related historical conflicts and even when an assertive land reform program was sought, such as in the 1960s, little was done to curb countryside violence which, over the last 60 years has cost the staggering amount of about 220,000 deaths, mostly of poor rural residents.<sup>41</sup> In fact, even though land titling was conducted in many parts of the country, in different times in the last 70 years, it was implemented piecewise and incompletely, blocked in most areas by politically powerful large landholders, creating widespread levels of insurgent activity.<sup>42</sup> Colombia remains one of the most unequal countries in the world, with a Gini index of 0.535 (higher in the countryside), low levels of investment in social programs and growing concentration of income in the hands of the richest 1% of the population between 1993 and 2014.<sup>43</sup>

In order to fulfill its potential for peace, land reform has to be conducted in a consistent, democratic, and significant scale, something that continues to pose serious political challenges in a country where conducting legal political or even labor related mobilization is regularly something that present a real risk of death. At the same time, it is important to understand the complexity and the uniqueness of contemporary social and economic circumstances. The national economy relies on the exports of a small number of primary good and commodities (oil, coffee, bananas, etc.) whilst the Colombian population is increasingly urbanized (note that family farmers [*campesinos*] represent now only 12% of the population, according to Montañez-Gómez.<sup>44</sup> It is also crucially important to realize the broad range of disputes and the deeply politicized interactions involved in the armed conflict now that peace seems an actually viable prospect.

The focus on globalization and market-based solutions by the liberal Colombian administrations over the last two decades, as much as the close alliance with North America that contrasts with the path taken by most neighboring countries, has done little to improve infrastructure, literacy rates and openness to trade, as analyzed by González.<sup>45</sup> As already indicated, though negatively impacted, the long conflict did not prevent the expansion and the profitability of many economic sectors, especially because the country's capitalism has been an intrinsically violent experience that both produced poverty and led to selective capital circulation and accumulation.<sup>46</sup> The sustained violence facilitated the transformation of the subsistence economy as it promoted violent land grabbing and the expansion of commercial agriculture.<sup>47</sup> With the former FARC fighters in parliament and integrated in the wider economy, and with Santos legitimized as a charismatic and effective leader, it is likely that it will be easier to approve a package of liberalizing measures and demonstrate to the rest of the planet that Colombia is 'open for business'. But even though it was possible for some sectors to thrive during the civil war years,

there continues to be huge risks and significant transaction costs involved. In this sense, the current prospects of the negotiation may signal towards a potentially conclusive settlement, capable of reducing the humanitarian costs involved in this protracted civil war, as well as facilitating access to Colombian natural resources. Yet, for a durable and in fact transformative peace to be achieved, further challenges remain.

### **THE PROSPECTS FOR A LASTING PEACE: THE ABSENCE OF MUCH-NEEDED DEVELOPMENTAL TRANSFORMATIONS**

The referendum of October 2nd was an unnecessary and poorly conducted course of action aimed at buttressing popular legitimacy of the decisions set in motion by the Santos administration. And regardless if one still believes that the majority of Colombians are on the ‘side of peace’ – given that key areas of country had a historical low turn due to a hurricane passing the Caribbean coast and that Uribe’s ‘No’ campaign was largely conducted on the tactics of fear – the point remains that a new way forward has to be (quickly!) found by both side of the agreement should lasting peace be found. As discussed above, a key question that will become gradually more apparent is the fact that, as much as the war, the peace will benefit some sectors and groups much more than others. During the belligerent period – the ‘war system’ from the 1970s to the 1990s, as superbly described by Richani – there was a tacit, even comfortable, arrangement between the guerrillas and the national state which allowed both sides to extract rent behind the scenes of a low-intensity war activity.<sup>48</sup> With the intervention of paramilitaries in the second part of the 1990s, the situation became less stable and it was increasingly more difficult to maintain the status quo. Some form of change was demanded by almost all parties involved, leading to a serious national debate and the eventual approval of the Havana Accord. In that sense, and despite all the rhetoric, there were many reasons for the peace agenda, but probably the attempt to maintain the overall

balance of politico-economic power was the main one. Crucially, to be on the ‘side of peace’ meant, in practice, to be on the side of a certain type of socio-economic agenda that depends and is likely to flourish from the peace agreement that was possible to sign.

Interestingly, if one considers that about two-thirds of eligible voters abstained from participating in the 2016 referendum, most Colombian did not agree with the terms of the agreement or did not feel encouraged to participate in the process. One thus needs to go beyond the specifics of the agreement on the ballot to understand the structural reasons behind this wide sense of frustration. In that regard, the notion of socio-economic violence could be seen as a useful tool to understand the remaking of the Colombia society, a nation defined by population displacement and continued governmental practices that for many eroded the minimal conditions for continued social existence (e.g. forced displacement, economic insecurity and structural lack of opportunities). That is related to the highly influential ideas of Galtung, who proposed the notion of structural violence to capture the reality of lasting socio-economic and political factors preventing specific social segments from accessing goods needed to meet their basic needs, while benefiting unevenly others in the process.<sup>49</sup> It is clear, therefore, that the peace in Colombia requires substantial and enduring changes in politico-economic processes, democratic institutions and rule of law in order to overcome the structural violence behind the historical conflicts destroying national society.

A viable agenda for lasting, transformational peace needs to include, in addition to cessation of conflict, significantly different basis of development. In other words, development as conceived and promoted by multiple players since the post-World War II period has coexisted and even benefited from the belligerent situation. Novel dimensions of development need to include key elements of social justice understood as the reforming of the institutional conditions that

sustain and reproduce poverty and inequality, including moving away from the historical, and more recently deepened, path of insertion into the global economy by means of commodity export, especially in the field of carbon-based energy production. In fact, it needs only to be remembered that much of the end of violence sought under Uribe's Democratic Security Policy was aimed most of all to create a more welcoming environment for foreign investors rather than actually addressing the deep-rooted causes of the continued conflicts in the country.<sup>50</sup>

Concrete measures should involve some form of *national pact for peace*, if needed, by means of a mini constituent assembly able to involve and thus place responsibility of other political actors in the process. Similarly, the Santos administration needs to make a much better case for the value of any type of Transitional Justice, including the political incorporation of former guerrillas, along with their monitored military demobilization, for a successful path towards peace. Similarly, effective and peaceful integration of FARC into the political arena has to be paved by concrete means to prevent that the debacle of the Patriotic Union of the mid-1980s, when more than 3000 former members of the guerrillas who had joined the political process were murdered with total impunity assured by the omission of the state apparatus.<sup>51</sup>

Though essential, these are not however sufficient elements of a lasting peace understood not only as the absence of overt violence. To be sure, effective representation of most affected communities in the violence of insurgency actions and especially those more in need of land needs to be a central element of the any new move towards a sustainable peace, so that the errors of the past, when the National Peasant Association, though formally allowed to exist, was consistently undermined by conservatives administration in the 1970s,<sup>52</sup> as well as the market-led land policies of the 1990s, which benefitted most the already capitalized, larger landholders.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, though perhaps even more challenging, the formalization of a peace accord needs to be seen as only the

first step towards an effective path of reforms capable of addressing the root causes that gave rise to such a devastating and destructive era in Colombian history.

As it stands, the peace accords may create new opportunities for trade with China and access to areas that were once inaccessible due to guerrilla activity, considering that so far the free-market economy – with a government close to Washington – has attracted little Chinese attention and this has been comparable with the investment made in the much smaller Ecuadorian market.<sup>54</sup> However, much more is required to overcome the low quality of the ‘actually existing democracy’, the ineffective national state and the reliance on natural resources exports, including oil, coal, nickel and gold.<sup>55</sup>

It should be clear, therefore, that, in the short term, the Santos administration needs to prove capable of preventing the derailment of the commitments made by both sides in the Havana Accord, largely by steering things away from the rising right-wing rhetoric of his right-wing predecessor. Much in the same way, though the slowdown in the global demands for much of Colombia’s exports in the recent years posed added challenges to consolidating an effective path toward peace, an agenda along more inclusive lines of national development needs to be pursued, especially by means of effective political and economic incorporation of the most traditionally excluded social segments, particularly in the countryside.

Moreover, these actions must be coupled by a clear rejection of the continued path of neo-liberal integration of the country in the recent wave of economic trends; something that is likely to be halted by recent political events in the United States, anyway. Finally, and tragically so, considering the long tradition of Colombian politics and also the ongoing ‘conservative turn’ in the region and around the world, it is somewhat likely that the promise of peace will soon be undermined by growing tensions and micro-scale wars difficult to appease. Colombia has to



effectively overcome its painful history in order to gain its future. This is a national experience of great regional and international relevance, which needs to be carefully and closely followed, especially because the specific architecture of the peace has direct consequences for how political equality is constructed and to avoid that some groups end up being ‘more equal’ than the others.

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